



Program

Commodore Computer Club

Volume 10

Number 1

January 1993

From the Editor

Well, the holidays are over, maybe, except for paying the bills for all the stuff you got. I hope everyone had a good Christmas and got everything they wanted. Also, by the time you read this, we will have ended one year and started on a new one.

With the ushering in of the new year it is also time to start thinking of new club officers. Also it is time to renew our dues for another year. It is the dues and club specials that keep the club going, so don't forget to renew and if you know anyone that got a new computer over the holidays, sign them up.

Now, getting back to the officers. The by-laws call for our election to be held in March and for the officers to take over in April. We need a committee to make recommendations for officers. So that is a request to volunteer. Be

thinking about who you would like to lead the club next year, remember, you can do it as well as anyone.

We will be electing a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Librarian and Editor. We also elect a Sysop, but that is done only when the current Sysop wishes to leave office due to the expense of moving the phone. We have some good people in the club and I am sure some of them would make good officers. Be thinking about them.

Enough about that, now on to other things. I have been reading a lot lately about the demise of 8-bit computers. But there are still a lot of them out in computer land. I doubt if they will ever completely die out. But with the decline in new software for them, the computer clubs will be and is the best value for the cost of a membership. It allows you access to hundreds of disks of software and all types of programs. Most of them are free and what charges there are is very little. Some programs are of a very professional nature. Run Magazine has ceased to exist, but Loadstar is still going. Compute has a 64/128 section. You can get all sorts of support on GENie and also Q-Link. Parsec, Inc has taken over the Commodore Flagship section on GENie. It is stocked with first rate software and support. Give it a try.

Well, I have rambled on long enough, besides, I am about to run out of space. See you at the meeting.

Editor.....Tom Goins

Meeting Information

Date Monday January 11, 1993

Time 7:00 PM

Place: O.G.&E. Service Center, 6801 Rogers Ave. (Across from Harps)

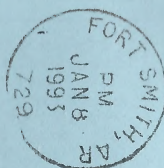
Demo: Mark Farley will have and demo another great club special. Other demo's will be announced at the meeting. The Amiga SIG will demo Deluxe Music Construction Set. We will also have lots of other goodies, so be there and enjoy.

Program

Commodore Computer Club
P. O. Box 6000
Fort Smith, AR 72906-6000

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Remember, 1993 Dues

9212
Donald Morton
106 Sterling Ct.
Fort Smith, AR 72903

Amiga Thoughts

By Steve Caperton

What next? That is the question I ask every time something new comes out on the AMIGA. The list of new software and hardware seems to be never ending. I thought I would just cover some of the various kind of things the Amiga is capable of doing (these are just ones I am aware of). First I think maybe we should just cover categories. The first being Music. Music isn't done any better on any home computer than on the AMIGA. There are programs that allow you to compose music either using the keyboard of your computer or the keyboard of a MIDI capable instrument. The four voices of the AMIGA can be combined with the keyboard instrument voices to make an orchestra. The quality is as good as there is anywhere. Plus there are many synthesizer programs that allow you to make any sound you can imagine. In the Video (picture) category there are all kinds of display programs that show (IFF) format and most other format pictures up to real time animations that look more real than real things do (well almost). Utilities are next, want to figure your entire electric bill for next year? Just foolin Mark. But almosAt!

There are accounting packages, how to keep up with the migration of Black Geese from Canada. Just about every subject you can think of there is a program to help you out. Last but not least there is the area of the Games. Pong just isn't the same any more. You now see warriors running across the screen and you hear sounds of guns and phasers and laser fire etc. etc. etc.... as you play. So now you may understand why I say "What next"?

DOS Commands

The Assign Command
By Doug Fink

Let's take a familiar situation. You've just gotten a great deal of new software for your computer on 3.5 inch diskettes. The installation manual says at the A> prompt type install and press return. Your machine is configured with a 5.25 in drive as A> drive and a 3.5 inch drive a B>. Thinking that it logically should work, you put the installation disk in B> drive and at the B> prompt type install and press return. You do so, and what happens? You guessed it, the A> drive lights up and soon you get General Failure Reading Drive A>, Abort, Retry, Fail. What do you do? Well, believe it or not, there is something easier than tearing your PC apart and switching drives.

That's where an old but little used DOS command called ASSIGN comes in handy. Before doing the installation at the C> prompt, type ASSIGN A=B and press return. Go to A> drive and what happens, B> drive lights up. You then proceed with the installation according to the instructions with your software package and everything works beautifully. After you are done with the installation at the C> prompt, type ASSIGN and press return. Go to A> drive and what happens, A> drive lights up again and everthing is as it was.

The ASSIGN command was frequently used (LONG AGO) when PC's frist came out with hard drives. It was used to assist you with applications that were designed to perform their disk operations specifically on drives A> and B>. By using the ASSIGN command those programs that were drive dependent could be made to use the C> drive (Continued on Page 7) ➔

Secretary's Report

By Basil Kyriakakis

The Secretary's Report and the Financial Statement are not available at printing time, so I will add a note about dues.

Dues are now due. Your dues are very important to the club. They are what keeps our bills paid. We have phone expenses, postage, P.O. Box Rent and once in awhile, some of our equipment needs repair for the BBS. For the small amount, you receive a lot. Our source of income is the dues and sales of our Club Specials which Mark puts together each month. So in todays economy, you get a good value for your \$12.00.

See you at the meeting, Editor.

C-64 Power Supplies
By Alf H. Jonassen

A common cause of expensive C64 repairs is the extremely poor quality power supply units supplied. (I think the 64C power supplies are better though, but I haven't been able to verify this.) Commodore 64 power supplies suffer from a severe design flaw: A voltage regulating IC (7805) is supposed to provide stable +5 volts power. This IC is basically a very healthy construction with internal overload and overheat protection which monitors the chip's health and automatically shuts down if an overload condition builds up. In the 64 power supply it is mounted in a nearly airtight plastic box next to the overheated transformer. The transformer is molded into some black plastic stuff which isn't helping to conduct the heat away. It is very, very hot in there.

The IC is protected against internal overheating, but when the heat comes from an outside source, it

simply breaks down. The regulating circuit ceases to function, and the input voltage is then simply fed directly to your precious computer. About 12-13 volts, roughly 2.5 times the allowed rating. Blue smoke, man!

Fortunately, there are several excellent quality third party power supplies available. If procuring even one of these units can save a simple repair bill, it will have paid for itself. If you're a 64 user, go out and buy one before YOUR power supply breaks down. I know of the following suppliers:

Tenex Computer Express
\$39.95 with lifetime warranty
The Grapevine Group
\$24.95

Software support International
\$39.95 for an original Commodore heavy duty unit.
Micro R & D
\$49.95 with lifetime warranty

You might even consider a 1764 Ram Expansion unit which comes with an excellent quality heavy duty replacement power supply

(Source: CUGL EAGLE, December 92, Commodore Users Group of Lawton/Ft. Sill)

FREE P.D. SOFTWARE

Contact these two address for free catalogs for freeware, shareware, and public domain software!

Caloke Industries, Inc. P. O. Box 18477, Raytown, MO 64133 (816) 478-6185. (PDsoftware for 64/128, IBM, and Apple)

Disks O'Plenty Inc., 8362 Pines Blvd., Suite 270, Pembroke Pines, FL 33024, (305) 963-7750, (PD Continued on page 6

Power (Spikes & Surges & Safety)

by Greg R. Guthman of CUCUG
(from , Metroplex Commodore Computer
Club, Dallas-Fort Worth MCCC NEWS)

You have heard the weather forecasts. You know you just "have" to get that last image rendered, but hey, you don't want to cook your best friend with the impending doom of an electrical blast from God! What is a conscientious hacker supposed to do?

There seems to be a lot of confusion and sales hype concerning the safety of your power supply. Opinions range from "When there is a cloud in the sky, I pull the plug" to "Hey, why worry, be happy." However, we ALL are at risk of hardware failure due to power problems, and biggest danger is present even when there is NOT a cloud in the sky! The system that we take for granted to deliver us power is riddled with surges, spikes, notches, sags, collectively called "electrical noise."

A spike (or sudden rise in voltage) as small as 0.5 volts at the chip level can cause errors in computing; 10 volts can cause irreparable damage. Most of the problems that we see on a day to day basis are not the "hard" failures of components, but "soft" failures of the system, such as unexplained "lock-ups" or garbled data on the modem or printer showing up from nowhere. Repeated attacks of this sort eventually cause component failure. This becomes even more likely as integrated circuit manufacturers pack more and more into a smaller physical package, more susceptible to electrical noise damage. The main source of electrical noise are the utility company, the internal environment and lightning.

The Utility Company

As demand for power increases, extra resources are brought on-line by a process called "grid switching." This involves turning on generators and even whole power plants many miles away to add to the pool of electrical power. The power company tries to do this smoothly, but it always produces a "notch" or brief dropout in power. The system also switches in and out banks of capacitors in

a process called "power factor correction." This compensates for heavy industrial loads, but creates a burst of electrical noise.

Internal Environment

Everything from coffee pots to fluorescent lights throw electrical noise back into your power system. Even computer peripherals can add to the problem. Grounded distribution systems exhibit two types of line noise: Normal-node and common-node noise. Normal-node noise takes place between the Neutral and Line (power) wires. Common-node noise takes place between Ground and Line wires. Normal-node is less likely to cause problems; modern power supplies filter most of this out. Common-node noise, harmless to most loads, causes problems because the safety ground is normally coupled to the computer's reference ground.

Lightning

Although this is the most common form of electrical noise, it can be deadly to an unprotected computer system. Even if lightning strikes many miles away, it can cause voltage "spikes" (short duration elevated voltages) and "surges" (longer duration) in the power lines.

Now we know what the problems are - all we have to do is eliminate them. A general home inspection is a good place to start. If you're not comfortable with electricity and breaker boxes, you might want to call an electrician. An inspection of the grounding system of your electrical junction box can return big rewards if you find loose connections. Even loud thunder can shake ground connections loose and cause dropouts.

There is one long bar along the side of most breaker boxes. This attaches to somewhere outside or to a cold water pipe for an earth ground. Again, if you have never taken the cover off a breaker box, get someone who has. If you have a voltage meter, make sure there is less than 5% drop of voltage between the breaker box and any branch circuit. You can also turn everything you own on at once and place an Ammeter (current meter) on the

lines going into the box. Make sure you are not pulling more than 80% of the rated current for that circuit (typically 20 Amps). You can exclude the items that have dedicated breakers such as washers and dryers.

The final and most important step is to invest in a line conditioner. There are three types on the market: surge, spike and RFI (Radio Frequency Interference) protectors. Any system you purchase should have all three of these elements and should be rated for at least 35-40% more current than you draw. RFI protection is accomplished through filters or "chokes" that eliminate frequency interference from affected power lines. Low-cost surge protectors, utilizing Metal-Oxide Varistors (MOV), will divert some spikes but will completely "open" when a big one hits, much like a fuse. (Since the MOV shunts the surge to ground, it becomes useless if it blows.) True surge and spike protection requires isolation transformers that "level out" fluctuations in voltage.

Finally, there's the Uninterruptible Power Supply or UPS. This is a good option if the UPS is designed well. Good systems will provide 100% perfect power that has been "inverted" from a battery system. The A.C. power is used to keep the batteries charged; if the power source is terrible, so what! Of course, the main benefit is that if the source drops out completely, you will still have access to your system until the battery drains. UPS systems can keep you up for minutes or hours, depending on the load and capacity. As with line conditioners, these systems should not be loaded above 80% of their rated capacity no matter what some sales person says. Some UPS systems simply pass the A.C. power through to your system and "activate" a battery backup when a power loss is detected. Systems like this typically include less line conditioning than a separate unit, and some manufacturers even recommend you purchase one of theirs! There is also the problem of the "switching time" it takes to get you back the power you lost. This can hurt your computer as mentioned above.

Now you should be able to make some sound choices about protecting your computer investment and sit back and laugh at the bad weather!

Xetec Super Graphic Gold Interface

By Bob Estand

I phoned Xetec and asked why the Xetec Super Graphic Gold printer interface was discontinued. I talked to a very knowledgeable person who explained the situation in detail. The cost of this item was nearly twice that of other available interfaces, and consumers were apparently unwilling to pay for them. Upon completion of the manufacturing run of the Gold, unused components were used in other products, with the exception of the special components needed for the Gold. Upon exhaustion of the supply of these special components, no additional orders were placed with their supplier for them.

Xetec continues to make the less expensive interfaces but are phasing out the 64 items, with current efforts being directed toward the Amiga market. Xetec will continue to repair any of their products, Gold included, as long as they have or can obtain components. They do have repair parts on hand, but NOT ONE complete unit. No future plans for manufacturing a rerun of this item are contemplated at this time and it is doubtful if there ever will be. So, the bottom line is due to lack of interest/purchases, 64 users have lost what I think was one of the great peripherals for our systems.

(SOURCE: CUGL EAGLE, Commodore Users Group of Lawton/Ft. Sill, OK (from The Commodore Mail ink.))

64 MODE GLITCH

By Jim Butterfield

If Commercial 64 software will not run on your 128 in 64 mode, try pushing the CAPS LOCK key before loading the software.

Unless CAPS LOCK is present, memory location 1 holds a different value than on a real 64.

EXPLANATION: Memory location 1 is part of a built-in I/O port on the CPU. It is used to control the datasette and memory bank switching. On the 64 it is only 6 bits wide (the upper 2 bits are 8). On the 128 bits 7 and 8 are used. Bit 7 reads the CAPS LOCK key (if the key is up the value in location 1 is 64 higher than if down, or normally 119 in the 64 mode).

Continued from page 3
software, Freeware for 64/128,
Amiga and IBM.)
(Source: CUGOS, The Official
Newsletter of the Commodore Users
Group of Springfield, MO)

It's New, It's Here, It's the A1200

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for the new line of Amiga computers.
(Taken from Amiga World Dec. 92,
via The TAGline, of Tulsa's Amiga
Group News)

Bytes of Humor

Liz: "Today I went to the dentist, and
now I'm confused."

Doris: "What are you confused
about?"

Liz: "Well, I'm not sure if I should
brush my teeth three times a day or
after every meal."

Mom: "Johnny, there were two
pieces of cake on the kitchen table
last night at bedtime; now there is
only one this morning. Can you
explain that?"

Johnny: "I don't know, Mom, unless
it is because it was so dark I didn't
see the other piece."

Prison Officer: Sir, I have to report
that 10 prisoners have broken out."

Warden: "Blow the whistles, sound
the alarms, alert the police."

Prison Officer: "Shouldn't we call
the doctor first? It looks as if it might
be measles."

(Source: CUGOS of Springfield, MO)

Dos Commands (Continued)
(Hard Drive). Now virtually all programs
will use the C> drive but the installation
programs that transfer and configure the
software still may be drive dependent.
So, if you run into one of those
installation programs (and I have) just try
the ASSIGN command.

[Source: Off The Wall, Official
Newsletter of the JC3 Commodore
Computer Club, 406 North Waterloo
Street, Jackson, MI 49201-1741][Via
December 1992 PEEKS and POKES,
Bloomington-Normal Computer Users
Group, P.O. Box 1058, Bloomington, IL
61702-1058]

DCTV

By Thad Cutsinger

Hey all you Amigans!

Here it is, a little review of something
you probably won't buy, and don't really
want to know anything about.

Recently, I aquired a DCTV unit.
(DCTV stands for Digital Composite
Television). Basically it is another great
little black box. The unit plugs into the
RGB port where the monitor does and the
monitor plugs into it. From there you get
into the tricky part. The "black box"
converts special 16 color hires pictures

into 16 million color composite ones. A
rather unique idea regardless of the
outcome.

My first reaction was skeptical as I am
the proud owner of a Video Toaster. The
output from the module is not Toaster
quality (Broadcast) but ranks a really
close second as far as I have seen. The
Color is spectacular! But it lacks the
super resolution of the Toaster. About
736 x 482 is the best it will do. While the
Toaster's higher band width allows for
1280 x 960 or some such thing. What
saves face for the DCTV unit is the fact
that it can produce 21 bit real time
animation. Since it uses 16 color (4 bit)
lff pics to display it's high color version
of it, it is very easy to make 16 color
animations which play on the composite
as 16 Million color.

This is where many new programs have
come in. Like ASDG's Morph Plus
which I am eagerly awaiting. Also
Imagine supports it directly now and
Scenery Animator does a stupendous job
with it, (they send a short animation with
the unit software), several others such as
Draw4D-pro, Real 3D, and Vista Pro
either plan to or already do support the
unit.

I expect great things from the unit and
will keep you posted on the doings here at
Tri Delta Productions.

Club Information

PROGRAM is a monthly publication of the
Commodore Computer Club of Fort Smith, Arkansas.
Subscription rate \$7.00 yearly (no charge to club
members or exchange with other clubs). Articles
pertaining to any aspect of computer use are solicited
from members. Such articles may be uploaded to the
bulletin board with appropriate notification via E-Mail
to "Editor Editor" or may be submitted on disk as a
text file. Articles in writing are also welcome.

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